

# A RARE AND UNREPORTED HOPEWELL CARVING

by  
Ray Tanner  
Covington, KY

Although a Hopewell carving has been known for nearly a century, and perhaps some people may have recognized it for what it was, no writer, professional or avocational seems to have published it. It is a wolf or canine paw print carved into the platform of a Hopewell pipe. This carving is the only one I know of.

The pipe was excavated from the Tremper Mound by William C. Mills in 1916 along with dozens of effigy pipes. It is published in Mills' 1916 report *Explorations of the Tremper Mound*, Mills says the about the carving "on top of the platform at the rear is incised a heart-shaped design, and directly below it four small pear-shaped decorations the five figures being elaborated with crisscross lines" (see Fig. 2). His description does not sound like a footprint but is otherwise accurate and

he may have looked at it upside down. His description of all five figures having a criss-cross pattern is not correct. The four toe-shaped designs have straight lines at right angles to the long dimension of the toe prints and no lines criss-crossing them.

The wolf print is probably as close as one could get to an artist's signature on a prehistoric piece of art. Not that it is a signature but its occurrence and importance was understood by the people who placed it there and probably had to do with Hopewell tradition, rites and ceremonies.

The book *Tracks and Trailcraft* by Ellsworth Jaeger shows both front and rear wolf paw prints. It notes that the inner toes on the hind foot are larger - exactly like those on the Tremper pipe carving (see

Fig. 1). Further research may determine other likenesses.

An artistic note about the carving: it appears that first a crisp line drawing of the design was made into the stone, probably with a flint tool. This would leave an engraving with V-shaped grooves. The artist would then have rounded off the edges and created a perception of roundness and contour. The addition of the cross-hatching on the heel part of the carving is characteristic of wolf paw prints and indicates that this part of the rear paw track is a deeper impression than the rest of the paw. It would be interesting to consider other similar cross-hatching on other Hopewell carvings which may indicate negative spaces or at least a feeling of contour, shape or form.

In conclusion it appears that the tiny incised relief carving represents a wolf or dog paw print. That it was a mark of identification representation would have been understood by the carver's contemporaries. It would be enlightening to study the carving techniques and obscure art forms used by the Hopewell people. They should be published and made known and perhaps by comparing notes with people who own, curate or study other engraved artifacts new understandings might be realized. There remains much study, thinking, hypothesizing and comparison to fully appreciate the creations of the Hopewell people.

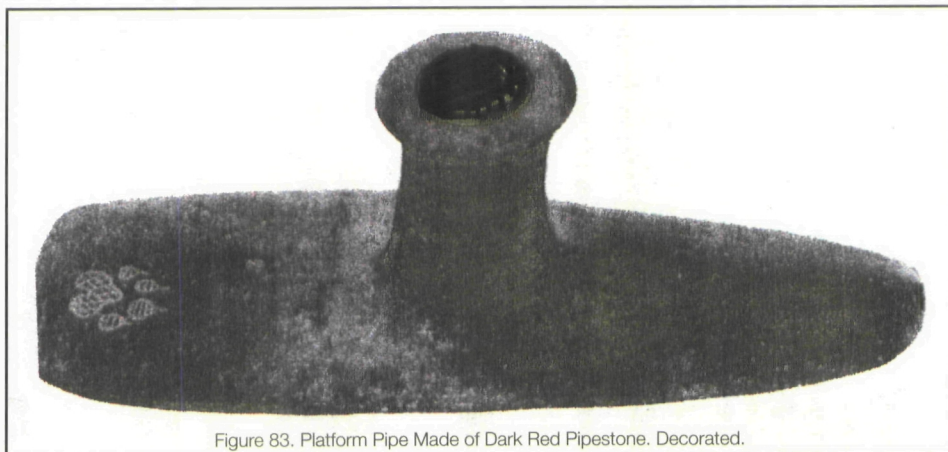


Figure 83. Platform Pipe Made of Dark Red Pipestone. Decorated.

Figure 1 (Tanner). Mills' illustration of Hopewell pipe from Tremper Mound.

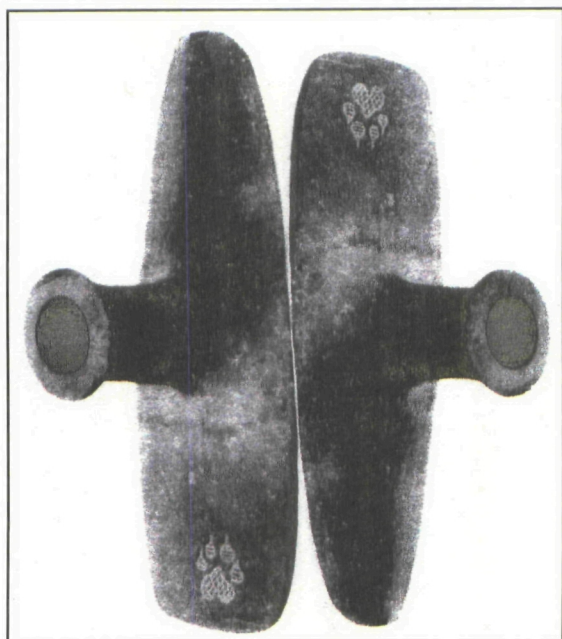


Figure 2 (Tanner).  
Two views of engraving.  
Left - Tanner. Right - Mills.



Figure 3 (Tanner).  
Stylized drawings of front  
and rear wolf paws.